

## **Genuineness: An Overlooked Element of Inviting Behavior**

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*Genuineness, the condition of sincerity in behaving as one's unadulterated self, is a concept that is inherently congruent with inviting behavior yet is not directly addressed in the literature concerned with Invitational Theory. The author discusses the concept of genuineness, describes how it fits Invitational Theory and argues for its inclusion as a fundamental element of Invitational Theory.*

Those familiar with the literature or one who has attended conferences featuring Invitational Education may notice that genuineness is a concept not directly addressed in Invitational Theory. Yet, when one is describing behaviors that are consistent with the inviting stance (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996), the concept of genuineness should not be overlooked. Perceptual psychology is one of the key psychological theories underlying Invitational Theory and relies on the concept that attitudes and beliefs determine behavior. Art Combs (1990) the progenitor of Perceptual Psychology addressed the concept of genuineness and refers to it as authenticity. He stated that authenticity is achievement of experience that can give order and unity to the person and his or her impact on others. To further enrich Invitational Theory, one of our next tasks should be to describe and illustrate the concept of genuineness adding it as one of the fundamental elements of the Invitational Model.

As shown in Fig. 1, this author proposes that genuineness should join the ranks along side the fundamental elements of Optimism, Respect, and Trust with Intentionality viewed as the underlying dynamic acting as a catalyst or fuel, distributed commonly across all four elements.

**Figure 1**

<b>Elements</b>	Optimism	Respect	Trust	Genuineness
	Intentionality			

Inviting behaviors stand in striking contrast to the omnipresent disinviting behaviors of mistrust, contempt, pessimism, aggression, and other common elements of destructive interpersonal interaction. The inviting stance eschews intentional caring, optimism, respect, trust, and cooperation (Purkey& Novak, 1996). Unfortunately, modern western society abounds with individuals who infrequently demonstrate inviting behaviors thus robbing themselves and others of opportunities to reach their potential. One of the goals inherent to Invitational Theory is that the frequency of disinviting behaviors within social interaction decreases as the frequency of inviting behaviors increases. Invitational Theory is in need of greater acceptance with a wider audience. Those individuals who are generous with their inviting behaviors frequently encounter disbelief, suspicion, and caution. Others might ask themselves, "Is this person for real, or is it an act?". It is understandable and natural that people will tend to doubt the sincerity of the person who intentionally invites others. Discussing the concept of genuineness within the context of Invitational Theory should have a high priority as a vehicle for anchoring rhetoric to action.

### **Genuineness**

Genuineness is commonly defined in differing ways: Possessing the apparent attribute of character; not spurious or counterfeit; authentic; honestly felt or experienced; actual; real; free from hypocrisy or dishonesty; and sincere. Having a better understanding of and a functional working

knowledge of the concept of genuineness is critical for those who seek to enhance their invitational abilities. Genuine behavior is based directly and accurately upon that which the individual truly feels and experiences. Their outward behavior is not tainted or misrepresented. Their internal experience matches their external communications. Carl Rogers (1994) and others such as Carkhuff (1969) and Patterson (1996) have used the term *congruence* to describe the condition of human behavior that is genuine. According to these pioneers in the field of counseling, congruence (or genuineness) is being honest and authentic in our dealings with our clients. This requires that we limit our work to clients for whom we can have real empathy, warmth, and respect. Congruence also involves knowing personal limits in terms of skills, time and energy. Brophy (1995) identified general characteristics of teachers that contribute to their success in socializing students. Among these characteristics is the teacher's personal level of social attractiveness. This should be based on a cheerful disposition, friendliness, emotional maturity, sincerity, and other qualities that indicate good mental health and personal adjustment. In this context, sincerity can be seen as parallel to the description of genuineness outlined in this article.

Being genuine is behaving without front or facade. The individual is fully aware of his or her feelings at that moment and is able to communicate this experience openly. For behavior to fit the definition of genuineness there must be a sufficient level of self awareness and choice.

## **Intentionality**

Choosing to behave in a particular manner as it relates to reasoned thoughts and feelings defines the essence of intentionality. Schmidt (1996) describes intentionality as the purposeful application of conscious choice with respect to the direction and purpose of one's behavior. Behaving intentionally is a key element in describing both inviting and

disinviting behavior. The condition of intention adds greater depth and impact to both inviting and disinviting behaviors. Human behavior as described by Purkey (1992) is categorized as consisting of four levels of functioning; Intentionally Disinviting, Unintentionally Disinviting, Unintentionally Inviting, and Intentionally Inviting. It stands to reason that to be inviting, one must be honestly and fully aware of oneself, act with thoughtful intentionality and hold a commitment to behaving genuinely.

## **Conclusion**

Those who endorse Invitational Education should adhere to a belief in the importance of Genuineness. When learning a new behavior having a full and concrete description of the criteria for that behavior is crucial. Because of its congruence with Invitational Theory, genuineness should be one of the elements within the criteria for inviting behaviors. It deserves inclusion in our personal and professional lives. The artful inviter can provide subtle encouragement. This inviting demeanor is viewed as valid by others only if it is also considered genuine.

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